

Cow Catcher Timber Sale
Environmental Assessment (EA # OR-105-98-05)

South River Field Office, Roseburg District

Prepared: August 25, 2003

Decision Documentation

Decision:

It is my decision to offer the Cow Catcher Timber Sale, implementing Alternative 2 of the Cow Catcher Timber Sale EA (pp. 3-5). The sale will contribute 4,678 MBF of timber, equivalent to 7,482 CCF, toward the annual allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for the Roseburg District.

The sale consists of five units located in T. 31 S., R. 6 W., Sections 5, 7, 9 and 17, W.M. These units total 146 acres, with 65 acres allocated to the General Forest Management Area and 81 acres to Connectivity/Diversity Block.

Approximately 12 acres of Unit 1, identified as Unit A in the EA and on the attached map, is available for harvest with tractor or other ground-based logging systems. Operations will be restricted to the dry season, between May 15 and October 1. The remainder of the sale will be cable-yarded with systems capable of maintaining a minimum of one-end log suspension. Cable harvest on Unit 1 is also restricted to the period from May 15 to October 1. The remaining four units are accessed by permanent or semi-permanent all-weather roads and are available for harvest in any season.

Spur road construction will total 312 feet. An old jeep road, identified as Road No. 31-6-6.6 on the attached map, will be renovated in Unit 1. These roads will be decommissioned and blocked to vehicular use upon completion of timber harvest, site preparation and reforestation. Approximately 5.6 miles of permanent roads will be renovated which will include installation of additional cross-drains, some resurfacing, and reshaping of road crowns and ditches.

Approximately 0.55 miles of BLM Road No. 31-6-5.0 will be paved from the end of Douglas County Highway 93 to a point above where the road crosses over Council Creek. This segment is located immediately adjacent to the creek and paving will eliminate it as a source of sediment.

All road construction and yarding equipment will be pressure washed or steam cleaned prior to being moved into the project area, to remove any vegetative material or soil that may be contaminated with weed seeds. This is intended to minimize, if not eliminate, the risk of transporting new weed species into the project area. Though no Port-Orford-cedar is present in the project area, equipment washing will reduce the likelihood that Port-Orford-cedar root disease may be introduced into the project area and transmitted to adjacent areas where Port-Orford-cedar may be present.

A single mountain lady-slipper was located and is being protected by removal of the area from Unit 1, in conjunction with a Riparian Reserve and Del Norte salamander site described below.

A Del Norte salamander site was located in Unit A (Unit 1) alongside a jeep road in 1998. Sites located prior to September 30, 1999, are to be protected to maintain long-term species persistence. The site was removed from the unit in conjunction with a Riparian Reserve. The jeep road will be blocked to traffic to protect the site from disturbance.

A partial red tree vole survey was conducted in January, 2000, which identified a single active nest tree in Unit A (Unit 1). On May 1, 2003, an attempt was made to verify the continued existence of the site. No evidence of a nest or other indications of occupancy were present. As a consequence, it does not constitute a known site and will not be managed.

Resin ducts and red tree vole nest remains and debris were submitted to this office between August 8th and 14th, by representatives of Umpqua Watersheds, more than three weeks after the close of the 30-day public comment period. These materials were reportedly collected in units of the Cow Catcher timber sale by individuals affiliated with another organization, whose survey methodology and qualifications are unknown.

The materials submitted by Umpqua Watersheds do not constitute new information. In the EA (p. 10), it is acknowledged that red tree voles utilize forest stands in the project area. It is also noted that the requirement for pre-disturbance surveys in the central portion of the red tree vole's distribution range was removed following the 2001 Annual Species Review which was provided for in the *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines in Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*, January, 2001. The central portion of the range includes the Roseburg District, and based on the range of habitat types in which voles have been found, the amount of available habitat and the number of vole sites that have been identified, the species is considered fairly common and there is no concern for its persistence within the South River Resource Area.

Rationale for the Decision:

The Roseburg District *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP) established an objective for an annual allowable sale quantity of 45 million board feet to be harvested from those lands allocated as Matrix, consisting of General Forest Management Area and Connectivity/Diversity Blocks (ROD/RMP, p. 60). It was assumed that an average of 1,190 acres of District lands would be regeneration harvested annually over the first decade of the plan. The implementation of Alternative 2 is consistent with these assumptions and objectives and would meet the purpose and need identified in the Cow Catcher Timber Sale EA (pp. 1-2), whereas Alternative 1 would not.

Comments on the Cow Catcher Timber Sale EA were received from four organizations and seven individuals, expressing both support and opposition for the proposed timber sale. None of the comments identified issues or concerns which were not already considered and addressed in

the EA, or which constituted new information that would alter the conclusions of the analysis. Some comments reflect incorrect assumptions and are addressed as follows.

- “The Cow Creek project is inadequate to protect Port Orford Cedar (POC) from *Phytophthora lateralis* (root rot).”

As previously noted in this Decision Document, there is no Port-Orford-cedar in the project area.

- “I am opposed to a managed stand that will be logged every 60 years.”

The stands authorized for harvest are not being managed on a 60-year rotation. Dependent on site class, forest stands in the General Forest Management Area are managed on a rotation of between 90 and 110 years while stands allocated to Connectivity/Diversity Blocks are managed on a 150-year rotation.

- “The EA does not adequately disclose impacts of new logging roads and landings on this key watershed.”

The area in which the sale is located is not designated as a Key Watershed. The nearest area designated as such is to the south in the Middle Creek 6th-field subwatershed. There is no new permanent road construction associated with the timber sale, and road density on BLM-managed lands will actually be reduced by planned road decommissioning.

The sale will remove 146 acres of suitable nesting, roosting and foraging habitat for the northern spotted owl. Sixty acres are located in designated Critical Habitat Unit OR-63. The BLM made a determination that the timber sale is Likely to Adversely Affect for habitat loss. There are no known nest sites within ¼-mile of any unit and the project will have No Effect for disturbance. The action was determined “not an adverse affect” on critical habitat because adjacent Late-Successional Reserves and Riparian Reserves will continue to fulfill the designated biological function of this CHU (FSEIS, Vol. II, Appendix G, Biological Opinion, pp. 20-22). The BLM received concurrence on these determinations from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the *Biological Opinion for fiscal year 1999-2000 Timber Sale Program and other Projects Affecting Listed Species* (Ref: 1-15-99-F-206), dated June 28, 1999.

Delisting of the Umpqua River cutthroat trout, removal of designated critical habitat for the Oregon Coast coho salmon, designation of Essential Fish Habitat pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and new information on fish distribution in the project drainages warranted a new analysis of the effects of the proposed timber sale on fish and aquatic habitat. This analysis also assessed effects of timber harvest at the project scale, rather than just the watershed scale. As previous consultation was never concluded, a new biological assessment was completed and submitted to NOAA-Fisheries for consultation.

The BLM determined that the action was “not likely to adversely affect” the Oregon Coast coho salmon and Oregon Coast steelhead trout, and would have no adverse affect on Essential Fish Habitat. The determination was based upon the protection of aquatic habitat, by Riparian

Reserves, from any direct or indirect effects associated with timber harvest, and negligible short-term effects associated with road renovation and improvements that will result in long-term reductions in sediment within the project drainages. In a letter dated July 11, 2003, NOAA-Fisheries concurred with these findings.

Monitoring:

Monitoring will be done in accordance with the ROD/RMP, Appendix I (pp. 84, 190, 193, and 195-199). Effectiveness and validation monitoring will be conducted with specific regards to: Riparian Reserves, Matrix, Water and Soils, Wildlife Habitat, and Special Status and Special Attention Species Habitat.

Protest Procedures:

As outlined in 43 CFR § 5003 - Administrative Remedies under § 5003.3 (a) and (b), protests may be made within 15 days of the August 26, 2003, publication date of the first notice of sale in *The News-Review*, Roseburg, Oregon. Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision.

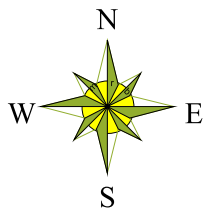
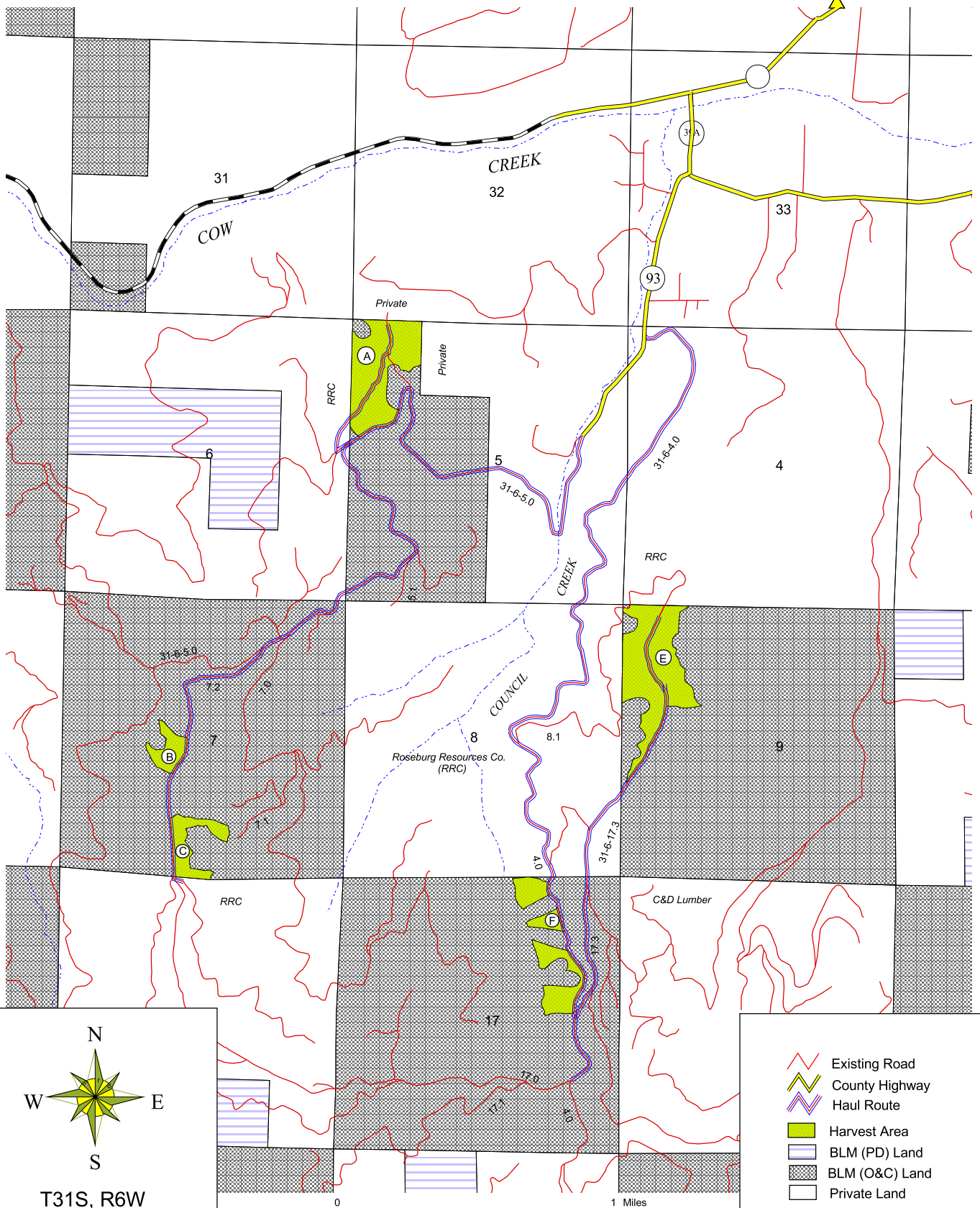
E. Dwight Fielder
Field Manager
South River Field Office

Date

COW CATCHER

Regeneration Harvest

RIDDLE
Approx. 3 Miles



T31S, R6W

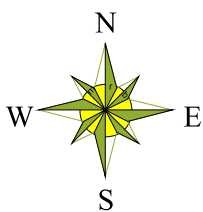
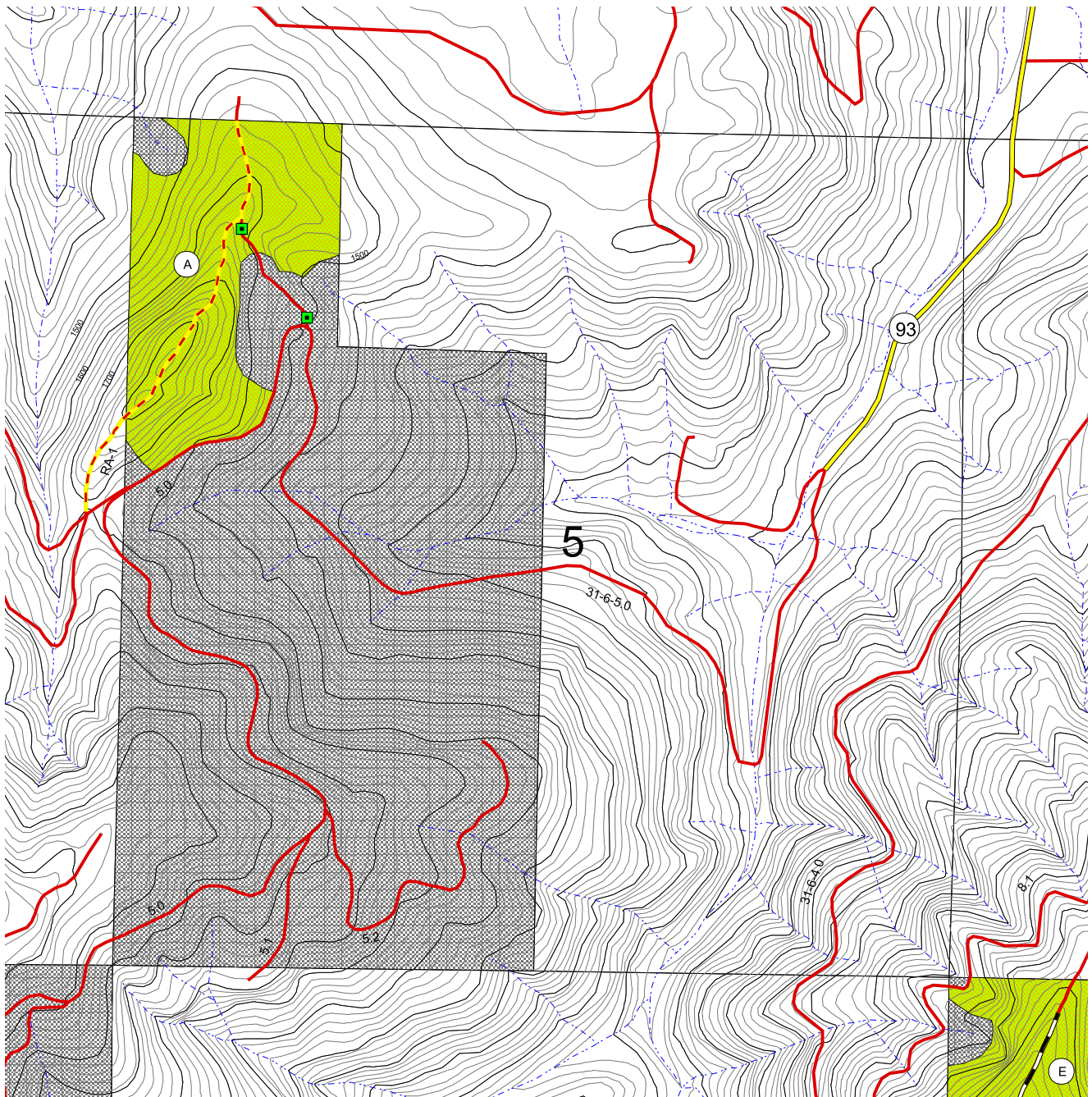
Willamette Meridian, Douglas Co., OR.

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COW CATCHER

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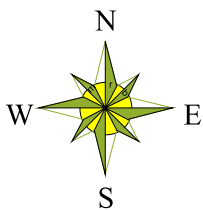
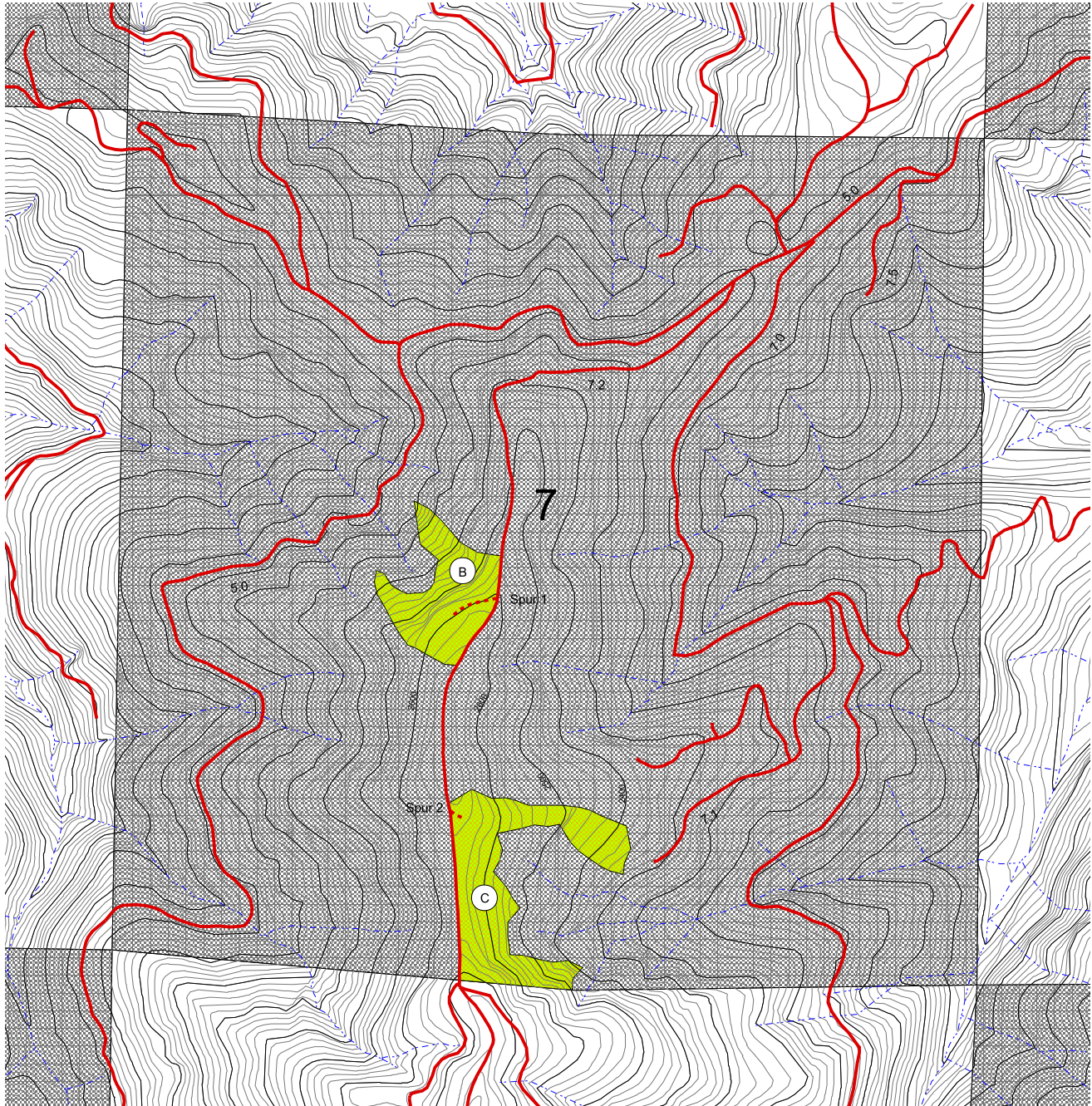


- Harvest Area
- BLM (O&C) Land
- Private Land

- Construct Roadblock
- Existing Road
- Renovate, Rock
- Renovate, Decommission
- 100' Contour
- 20' Contour
- Stream

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Regeneration Harvest



T31S, R6W

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1000 0 1000 Feet

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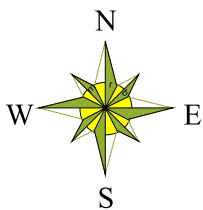
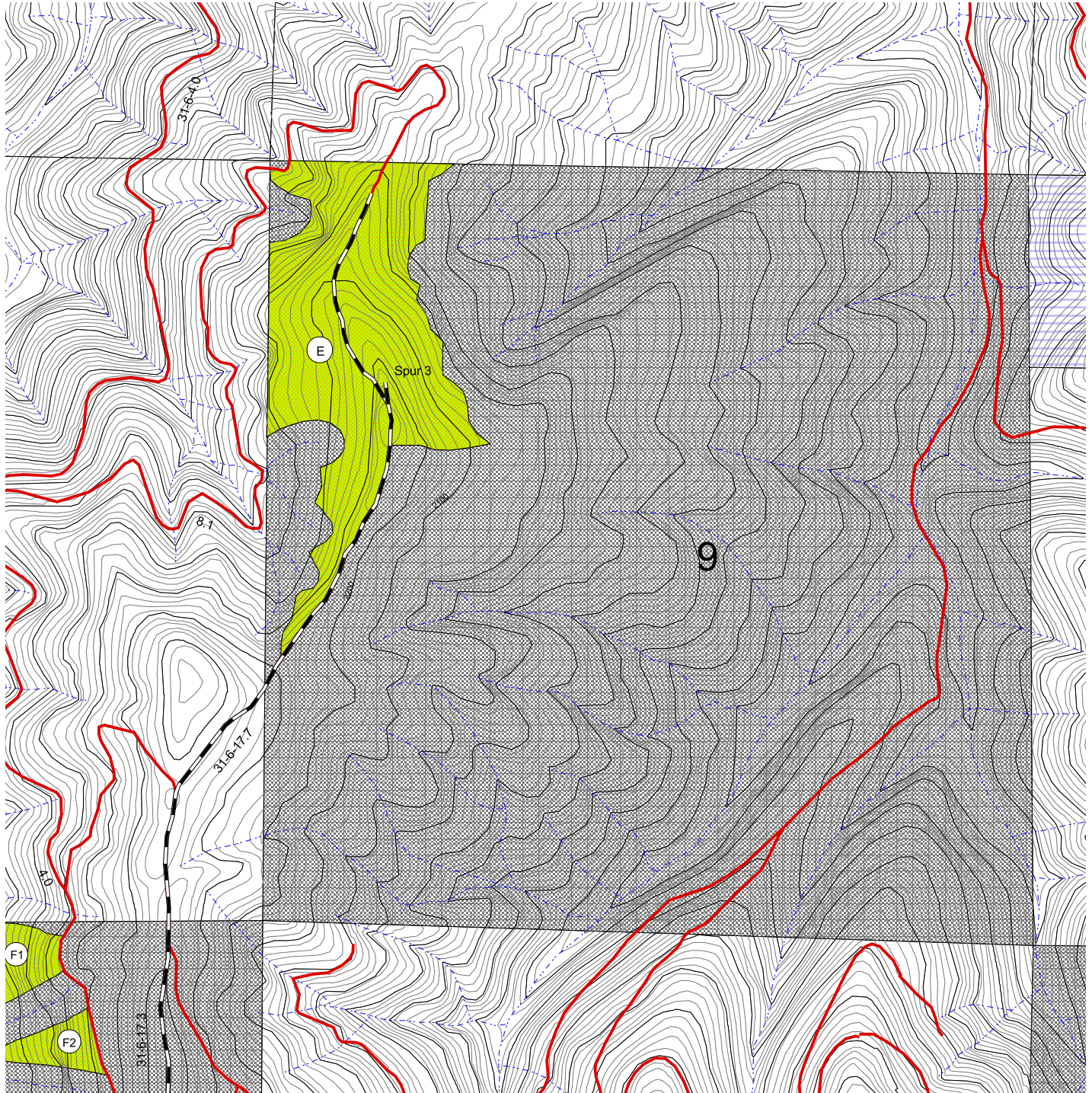


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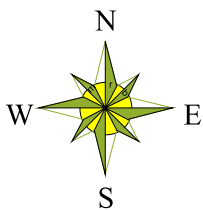
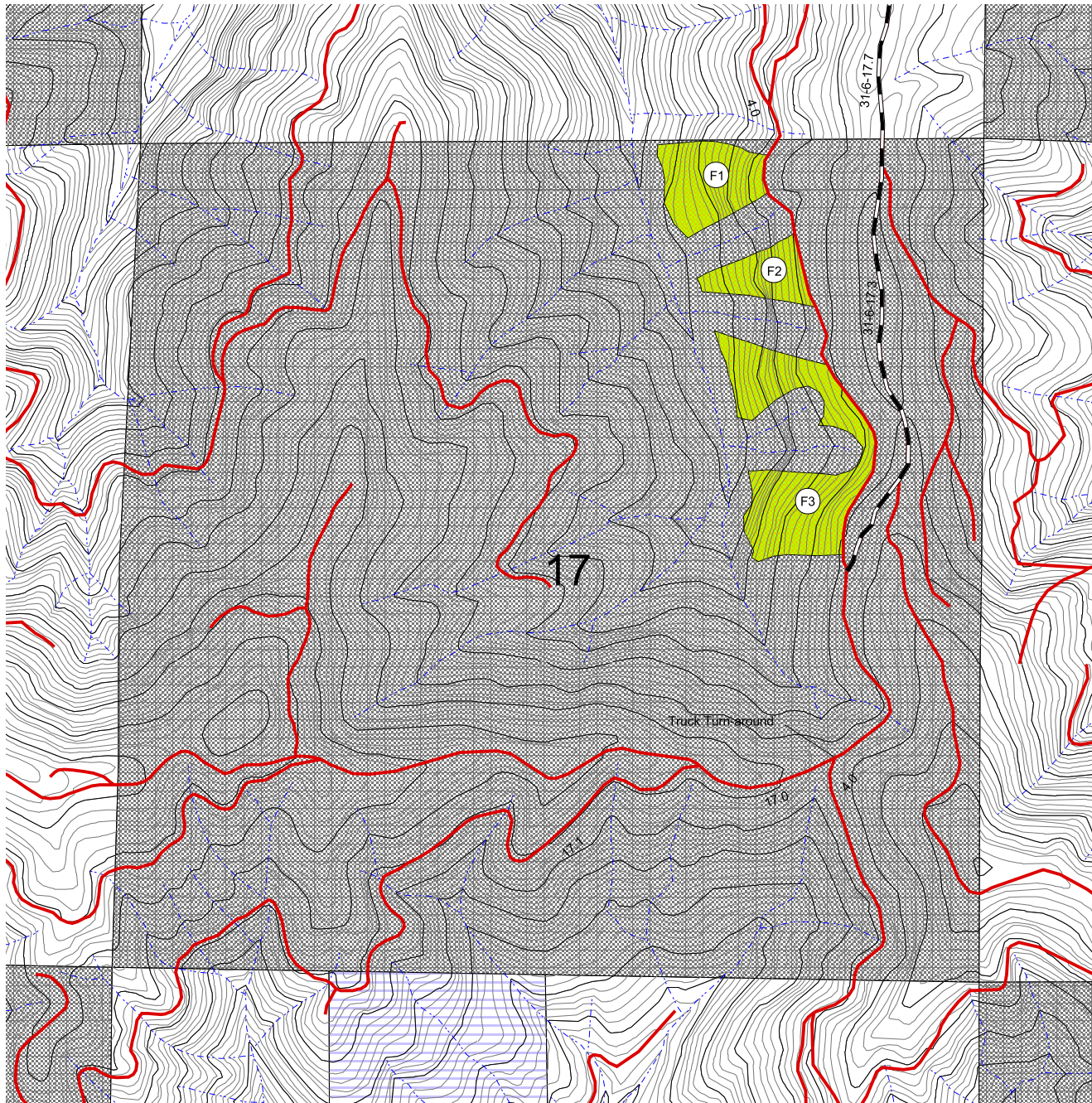


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